

[Dan Deering]

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FOLK STUFF & RANGE LORE PHRASES & SAYINGS - DIALECT

Phipps, Woody

Rangelore

Tarrant Co., Dist. #7 [82?]

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Dan Deering, [?] 73 was brought to Texas in 1869, when his family moved there to establish a farm in Gonzales Co. He began doing the chores at five, and was plowing at seven, riding the plow stock to the fields. He became a good horseman before he was 16, at which time he was employed as a cowboy with a trail herd going from Gonzales Co. to Dodge City, Kans. He returned home to work for a year, then was employed by Capt. Rainer to work as a cowboy on his Baylor Co. Ranch. He assisted in moving the ranch to King Co, then settled on a section in Swisher Co., only to trade it later for a horse and saddle. He was then employed by the [?] ranch in Swisher, and assisted in moving it to the Indian Territory. He assisted in moving it back to Swisher later when the Govt. gave the order for all cattle to be moved out of the Territory. He was employed on the Red River Ranch by Tom Waggoner, as a horse trainer, and was with him when he bought his first race horse. Dan still remains in the employ of the Waggoner family, and is foreman of the Waggoner ranch and the Arlington Downs race track in Tarrant Co., Tex. His story:

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"I wouldn't be where I am today if I hadn't of been a cow poke and a good hossman when I was in my prime. [How-some-ever?], I mightn't be able to help you much on it because it's like old Tom said, I forget more than any man he ever seen.

"Now, I was born in Alabama, but where, you couldn't prove by me because I done forgot that years ago. My folks told me that dad moved us to Gonzales Co., when I was a four year old. I don't know because it seems to me like that is the earliest thing I can recollect, being on the old farm. My earliest recollections are about toting water when I was about five, and riding the plow-hosses to the fields, then plowing before I was seven years old. You bet, I plowed then. Had to, and never thought nothing about it because all kids worked in them days.

"Of course, all the cow punching I ever done before I was 16, was driving four or five milk cows in from the pasture. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 When I was 16, the West Brothers, cattle dealers, came through Gonzales Co., and bought up all the stuff ready for a drive. I was took on as a cow puncher, and we started the herd up the trail to Dodge City, Kans.

"We took what was known as 'The Western Trail,' which went through old Fort Griffin, Beaver Switch, now known as Electra, in honor of Tom Waggoner's daughter, Electra, through Eagle Pass, now known as Vernon, and on up through the Territory to Dodge City. The drive took three months, and there were eight cowboys working. We'd drive the herd for about six miles, then let it drift. Ordinarily, it'd drift about four miles, making ten in a day, unless driving for water. Then we'd drive day and night 'til we reached it. We had a lot of stomps along the road, and especially when the herd was dry. They'd scent water, and run 'til they reached it if it took all day. If the water was up, we'd sometimes be two and three days in crossing, and the cow pokes'd be in the water all day long. I recollect a little about the Indians collecting toll for us crossing their land but it's been so long ago I couldn't give you much on that.

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"In that day and time, there were so many herds going up the trail that it looked sort of like street cars. One or two along every day. When we'd have a stampede, our herd'd stomp right into another, or maybe another'd stomp into ours. Which ever was the case, we'd have to take time and cut our stuff out as they cut theirs 'til the two herds were sorted.

"Wasn't no trouble to get rid of the herd after it reached Dodge City. Some of the boys started right back, some of the others stayed to spend their money. I know it took me around a month to 3 get back home. I stayed there 'til along in the next year, when I went to Baylor Co., and was hired by old Captain Rainer as a cow poke. Cap ran about 4,000 head in his iron. He sure had a helluva iron then. It was so big a calf'd be half scar after it was branded. You made it like this: CALL.

"I wasn't so long on the Baylor Co. ranch 'til Cap decided to make a move to Baylor Co. After we settled in Baylor, he decided to change that big old brand into the 'Z Block.' You make it like this: Z. Jim Fish was the ram rod for Cap, and Joe Dearing, my bud, was the wagon boss. The [tw?] cow pokes I buddied up with were old Bill Proctor and George Bigham. Them two galoots and me done most of our work together, and were like shadows to each other.

"What one of us done, the others done. If anybody jumped one of us, and we got licked, the others'd take it up. As a rule, they took up for me all the time because I was little for the kind of men that worked the range in them days. You hardly ever saw a man on a hoss then that wasn't six foot or, over. I could do my work along with the best of them, though. I bull dogged, roped, raced, and rode wild hosses with them any time it was handy. Rainer only hired top hands, and any of them could be depended on in a tight spot, like in a stomp or something. You needed a top hand in a stomp because he had to be good enough a rider with a fast [enoughthoss?] to get out in front of the herd and turn the leaders into a circle, or a mill as the boys called it.

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"I always had big ideas, and left Cap to settle me some land out in Swisher Co., and near [?]. I settled a section, 640 acres, paid my filing fee of about \$35.00, got my contract 4 for 40 years at \$2.00 an acre, then settled down to work the claim. I like to have starved to death 'til I met a feller name of McDade, and traded it to him, lock, stock, and barrel for a hoss and saddle. A railroad runs through it now, and every foot of it on both sides is in cultivation with the acreage selling around \$40.00 and \$50.00

"I took that hoss and went to work on the Word Ranch near [?] in Swisher Co. I don't know just how long it was, but it wasn't so awful long after Word hired me that he decided to move his herd to the Territory. We rounded the herd up, then drove it up to around old Camp Supply.

"Camp Supply was an old buffalo hunter's supply place with three mud houses and a dugout. There were some nigger soldiers stationed at the camp, and I spent my first night there in misery. All night long, just about the time I'd get off to sleep, one of them'd call out; '10 O'clock, and all's well. 11 O'clock, and all's well,' and so on.

"I never spent another night there, but spent the rest of my nights out in the open like the rest of the cow pokes done. We ranged the critters around there for several years before the Government gave the orders for all cattlemen to vamoose, or, move the herds out of the Territory. We moved the herd back to the old location in Swisher, then I lit out back to the Rainer.

"George and Bill and me got to talking about how we'd like some city property to make some money on, and we decided to enter the Oklahoma Land Rush. We had good hosses when we entered the line up, but you just ought to have seen what all the rest of them galoots was topping. Buggies, surries, schooners,. In fact, all kinds of wagons, and one feller was actually topping a 5 cultivator. Yeow, a cultivator!

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"The starting gun was fired at 12 O'clock, and then the real fun started. Those that didn't have hosses got in somebody's way, or somebody got in their way. In about 10 minutes, there were more wheels come off than ever before, possibly in history. I always wisht somebody'd counted them.

"George, Bill, and me kept right on riding 'til we got to Woodard. [We?] settled some of the gosh-darndest claims ever a body heard of, and set in to hold them. We settled lots right in town. We stayed on our claims for two days and nights, then left because we needed a change. We run short of grub, and like to have starved to death. Then, up on top of that, our hosses had sweated our saddle blankets plum through, and we had to sleep on them wet blankets. I tell you the Rainer was a gladsome sight when we got back to it and put our bread-baskets back to normal.

"A little while after I come back that time, Cap decided to make a move to King Co. We rounded the herd up, and drove it over there. I don't rightly know just how long it was after that that I left Cap again, but this time, I hired out to old Tom Waggoner, who'd just bought the old Red River Ranch in Wilbargar, Co., and Old Burk Burnett had just bought the old '8' ranch. We called it the 'Scab 8' because it made such a bad scab when they stuck the iron on a critter, that there wasn't a thing there but a scab 'til it healed over. Burnett bought the place from the Lewisville Land and Cattle Co. The Waggoners have had the 'DDD' brand ever since I've known them, but they only have one D now. That's because the big scale rustling has quit. The rustling is all done now, a cow at a time wiht a pick up truck.

6 "I hired out to Tom when he first began to get race hoss minded, and he hired me as his first hoss trainer. I went with him when he bought his first race hoss, and was with him through all of his races. In fact, I've never left the Waggoner family since that time when I first went to work for them. When I wasn't working racing stock, I worked as a cow puncher on the place.

"I never paid much attention to how much acreage Tom had then because he kept adding to the place all the time. You see, the nesters there had the same experience I'd had, and

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they'd come to Tom every day, just begging to be bought out at any price. Other places, the cattlemen never bought, and them nesters'd have to leave without any money a-tall, but Tom paid for what he got, and the ranch is now in five counties. Wichita, Archer, Baylor, Wilbarger, and Foard. There are over 600,000 acres in the place today.

“Because Tom loved hosses so well, and I worked with his best, we were together quite a lot and he naturally told me about his past. He didn't have any easy [?] when he was getting his together, either. He hunted buffalo, and most of the nights would be so cold he'd have to sleep between the hides. Pile a stack of them over him, and a stack under him. Just think how tough that must have been when an old buffalo hide is the hardest thing a man ever slept on, knots all through it, and stiff as a board. For the life of me, I don't see how he made it.

“Another thing happened to him when he had his ranch in the Territory. All the ranches up there had dugouts for headquarters. 7 Burk Burnett had his ranch next to Tom's in the Territory, and he had a dugout the same as Tom had. Well, there was a tough outlaw by the name of 'Red Buck,' and the Texas Rangers were after him. Old Captain Bill McDonald was in charge of the bunch after Red Buck, and they chased him right up to Tom's dugout. Red Buck lit off his hoss and ducked into the dugout for a siege. It just happened that none of Tom's men were there, so Red Buck had it all to himself but not for long because old Captain Bill rode right up to the dugout, lit off his hoss, and dove right into that dugout after Red Buck. Got him too. Killed him right there with out getting a scratch.

“Old Captain Bill was a tough character, alright. That there Fort Worth preacher, Frank Norris. He used to say old Bill couldn't go in swimming because he had so much lead in him he'd sink. I've seen Bill lots of times, sitting around hotel lobbies or at the county fairs where we'd have races. I don't think any body ever saw Captain Bill without his two big pearl handled six-shooters at his side and his Winchester rifle in his lap. He went everywhere that away, and was known as, 'Un Hombre Muerta,' or, one hombre of death. He'd get you too, if you were wanted.

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"Now, I didn't work for Tom hisself, all the time, but I worked for T.B. Yarbrough, one of his cousins, on the Buckle L at Childress, Texas. You make the iron like this: . He run around 3,000 head about 15 miles S. of Childress, on land a crow wouldn't fly over because it was so hilly. It was along the [?] River, you know, and it's just one hill after another.

"There were times when I'd drive cattle from the Buckle L to the [Ector?] Ranch, in [Ector?] Co. There wasn't over 1,000 head on 8 the place, because it was used as a feeder spot and wasn't big enough for a ranch.

"Oh, those Waggoners had to have room when they settled a place. Why, Guy and Paul Waggoner were given the old [Waggoner?] ranch first settled on/ near Bridgeport, Texas, by their grandfather, and just because there wasn't but 10,000 acres in it, Paul said it was just big enough to grow bull frogs on. Guy bought Paul out, and he and Yarbrough fed cattle out on the place.

"Why, folks gasp when I tell them there's 3,000 acres here in this place. It's right here on the Dallas Pike, and they pass by every day, but they don't dream there's that much acreage here. The family keeps around 400 head of fine stock here on the place.

"Another thing, too, is that most folks think that there's no more hosses here. That's where they're fooled because there's quite a few, and [onetof?] them's worth \$26,000.00 alone. One thing about Tom was, that a hoss never go too high if he wanted one. Although, quite a lot of folks have a mistaken idea about how much he's paid for some of them. The highest he ever paid for one hoss was when he paid \$100,000.00 for Phalarso. He made plenty of money on Phalarso, and finally sold him to the Mexican Government for a stud at \$1,400.00.

"Yes, the Waggoners have been awful good to me. Of course, I've been in the family a long time, and helped old Tom settle his mind on where to spot the race track. Him and me rode out along the pike, and I told him here was about as good as he'd get any where, so

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here's where he located. While the place was in the building and ever since, I've been the foremen here on the place. I've got as good a home as ever a body'd want, right there in Arlington, but Paul insisted on the wife and me a-coming out here and making this place our home. I couldn't refuse, because it's a far better a place than I'd ever be able to have, and I'm furnished a car, all expenses are paid, and all I do is oversee the work. There isn't much of that to do now, as I've only got about 15 men here now when we used to have from 75 to a 100 with a four to a \$5,000.00 pay roll. All that went when the races in Texas went.

"I've still got old Tom's best cow hoss. He was sure devoted to 'Cowboy,' (that's his name), and rode him every where he rode a hoss. Cowboy's over 18 years old now, and rides like a two year old. We don't have so many cows here in a roundup, but Cowboy still cuts as good as he did in his prime. There's a picture on the wall there, of Tom on Cowboy.

"I've never been able to talk much about Tom's dieing, but I like to think of the Tom Waggoner Memorial race. It was run the first meet after his death, and there were over half a million dollars worth of hosses in it. When they were released from their paddocks, they pranced down the length of the grandstand then back to the middle. They all lined up, and faced the grandstand, then while a bugler blew taps, those hosses just stood stock still without a muscle quivering, or any movement anywhere. That's a picture many a race fan will carry to their graves because the stands were loaded, and all available space took up. You could hardly buy standing room.

"There was a queer angle to that race, that also bothered many a race fan, and that was when the long shot, not worth over \$10,000.00 won the race. Why, one of the jockeys, Wayne Wright, 10 flew here from California to ride the favorite. You talk about a lot of sick people, and there were a-plenty of them after that race because hardly anybody bet on the long shot to win even third place.

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There are times when I get to thinking about the old days, and wisht I was back there a-punching cows along like I used to. I've heard since I left Cap Rainer that he bought the Rainer court house to live in, and that he'd been in a hot county seat fight. All that is just hear say, but I do believe he was the first one to have barb wire in that part of the country because we'd drive cattle to Abilene for shipping, and never see a barb. It was 125 miles to Abilene, and there wasn't a fence the whole way. Cap fenced 8,000 acres, and made the first fenced pasture I'd ever seen. Sometimes, Cap's drive to Red River for Range Delivery, too, and we'd never see a fence the whole trip.